

# Journal Inquirer

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- attention: Juan F. Perez
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- comments: Thanks again for your time (on a Friday afternoon!) and insight.  
Julie Springle

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# TOWNS

## Officials: Pratt brook contaminated with PCBs

By Julie Sprengelmeyer

Journal Inquirer

EAST HARTFORD — PCBs in some soil in and around a brook at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft are in concentrations 60 times greater than state standards, according to information from state and federal environmental agencies.

At its worst, PCB contamination in the Willow Brook and Willow Pond area is from 400 parts to 600 parts per million, Lori Saliby, an environmental analyst with the state Department of Environmental Protection, said Friday. In other areas, just a trace was detected, she said.

Willow Brook is on the Pratt campus off Main Street, and is not on Rentschler Field, where the state is building a \$91 million football stadium for the University of Connecticut.

The state's acceptable PCB limit on industrial property is 10 parts per million. It's even lower for residential property, at one part per million.

Polychlorinated biphenyls cause cancer in animals, and are suspected carcinogens for humans. The chemicals were at one time widely used to lubricate machinery, particularly transformers.

Pratt officials say the brook was polluted several decades ago, before PCBs were banned. In those days, they said, drains in the factory floor connected directly with the brook.

Although the contamination of the Willow Brook/Pond area is severe, tests conducted by a private company at Pratt's request indicate the PCBs are limited to the Pratt site, according to Juan A. Perez, an environmental scientist with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's New England division.

Perez added that contamination levels were significantly lower downstream.

Also, samples show the PCBs have not flowed downstream past Main Street, toward the Connecticut River, according to both DEP and EPA officials.

Water movement wouldn't normally disturb PCBs, which, because of their chemical nature, have an affinity for organic material, such as sediment, Saliby explained.

"They will bind on there pretty tightly, and they're not that interested in dissolving in the water," the DEP analyst added. But excavating the polluted soils could pose a problem.

So in removing soil, Pratt will have to divert the stream around the area and "lock in" the pollution with what's essentially metal sheets to ensure nothing escapes, according to Cori M. Rose, a project manager with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The federal regulatory agency is reviewing Pratt's request to remove soils and to cap certain areas, and is seeking public comment on that request.

The DEP, EPA, and the Corps of Engineers are working with Pratt to determine the best way of dealing with the pollution. The mediation plan will involve removing some of the contaminated soil, and likely will entail capping part of the area. Pratt expects to remove 28,628 cubic yards of contaminated sediment, according to the EPA.

And although acceptable industrial PCB limits are 10 parts per million, Pratt may not have to meet that standard.

Companies that put up a physical barrier so no one can come into contact with PCBs may propose an alternate standard, Saliby said. The details of Pratt's mediation plan are being negotiated — including how much contamination

would be left.

In the meantime, Pratt has fenced off the area. Because Pratt has isolated the area, the pollution shouldn't pose a health hazard to nearby residents, Saliby said.

"The biggest hazard posed by PCBs is direct contact," Saliby said. "Since there's a fence keeping them out, I would say there's really a minimal issue with exposure."

The state DEP issued a notice of violation to Pratt after the pollution was discovered, giving the company 30 days to investigate the problem and submit a schedule for remediating it. Pratt complied with the notice, Saliby said.

EPA officials, meanwhile, say Pratt has signed a letter of consent with the federal agency, agreeing to clean the area.

"We have always had tremendous cooperation from Pratt & Whitney, and we expect that cooperation to continue," Perez said.

Pratt's request for a permit to remove sediment pending before the Corps involves removing soils from 4.15 acres in and around Willow Brook and Willow Brook Pond, and replacing the soils with a fabric layer, clean earthen layer, and stone cap. Also, a 1-acre wetland downstream of Willow Pond Dam would be restored and revegetated.

*Written statements about the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' review of Pratt & Whitney's plan to remediate PCB contamination in East Hartford should be forwarded to the Corps by April 12. For more information, write Cori M. Rose, Project Manager, New England District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 696 Virginia Road, Concord, MA 01742-2751.*

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## Superintendent criticized for increasing secretaries' work time

By Heather Nann Collins

Journal Inquirer

EAST HARTFORD — Some Board of Education members say the board — not Superintendent James J. Fallon — has the final say on whether some school secretaries will become full-year employees.

"The board, who is in charge of the budget, should have some say," member Barbara Cotoia said at a board meeting this week. "I do not feel the superintendent has the right to do what he did."

In November Fallon notified 32 secretaries

they would become full-year employees. Eleven employees would be affected, the Board of Education's meeting packet for next week states.

Board member Robert Damaschi said Wednesday that Fallon should not have done that. The board creates positions, he said, and if one is eliminated or changed, it should be by a board vote.

Damaschi criticized Fallon for being vague about why the secretaries need to be made full-year employees.

"There was no full discussion with the board," Damaschi said. "He was very vague

Professional Employees Independent Union, filed a grievance with the school system's human resources director, Robert Corso.

Union steward Peter Bartkoski said he has met with Corso but declined this week to discuss the ongoing grievance.

But board Chairwoman Kathleen Randall said Tuesday that the number of secretaries affected has been reduced to include only elementary-school secretaries.

Fallon included \$58,000 in his \$66 million budget proposal for the coming fiscal year to cover the cost of increasing the secretaries' work time.

middle school. She asked Fallon to rescind the order. He did not.

Randall has said the change was "operational," exempting Fallon from the requirement that he get board approval.

Damaschi disagreed. Fallon "should have presented to us the reasons" for the increase, he said. "Instead, he took it upon himself to do it."

Although Randall said she was unsure whether the matter would come to the board for a decision, Damaschi said it would.

"There's no question about it," he said. "I